

The Korean Peninsula in the U.S.'s Post-9/11 Military-Security Paradigm

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Abstract:

This article analyses the Korean peninsula in light of the US military-security paradigm after 9/11-2001. The intent is to analyze if there have been any changes in the US position and how this has impacted the security situation in the Korean peninsula.

It seems evident that the Korean peninsula has been on the backburner of American foreign policy since 9/11, and President Bush has adopted a non-compromising stance in relation to North Korea. However, the current security concerns are actually representative of the traditional US concerns toward the Korean Peninsula, which was dominant even before September 11, i.e. meet the rise of China, nuclear proliferation and control an unpredictable North Korea. The war against terrorism has however forced the US to adopt a few changes that have impacted the Korean peninsula.

Despite the overall continuity of US policy towards the Korean peninsula, some significant changes have occurred after 9/11. The war on terrorism and the US engagement in other regions has impacted the US policy in the Korean peninsula. Some have created new opportunities for communication and cooperation, and others threaten to destabilize the region. This said there are very few changes that threaten to throw the region into actual full scale war. The most important change is the redeployment of US troops to Iraq and south of Seoul. This will not impact the US ability to assist South Korea and its allies in general, but raises important questions as to the intent of the redeployment: is it a sign of weakness towards North Korea's nuclear ability; or is it a preparation for a preemptive strike; or disengagement in the region? The reality is probably neither, but the dangers of perceptions and that governments are badly prepared to fill the power vacuum created by the US redeployments could threaten to destabilize the region in the short term. On the other hand it could provide new possibilities for cooperation and dialogue if the US impact on the coming negotiations is decreased. The US has been less inclined to cooperate with Pyongyang than any of the Northeast Asian governments and this has stalled many talks; the Northeast Asian governments are much closer to each other in strategy for the future of the Korean peninsula and strengthening the regional orientation could provide for a new strategy. The issue of nuclear proliferation demands attention and if the international community, with the US at the helm, fails to create a nuclear free Korean peninsula we will risk a nuclearization of the region, which would include South Korea and Japan as potential nuclear powers.

In conclusion there is increased unpredictability in the region, but the real danger of military conflict seems to be relatively remote. Over time the decreased US involvement can open up for a more independent South Korean policy towards North Korea that could pacify the Korean peninsula. There are however very little trust and cooperation in the region which makes the US continued engagement crucial for some time, and a too rapid redeployment of American troops is unwanted for all parties involved, including North Korea and China. Honest negotiations, which takes into account the North Korean security situation and the problems of verifying a North Korean disengagement of the military nuclear program is necessary for the stability of the region. However, at present the prospects for such a scenario are not encouraging.

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When the United States (US) became the victim of simultaneous terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th, 2001 (hereafter 9/11) the world changed fundamentally. This has at least been the common rhetoric in the US, but how much of a change has there been in the military security paradigm, rhetorically as well as in practice? Already in 1991, when the Cold War ended, there were supposed to be major changes, even revolutions, in the US military security paradigm, as the major threat, the Soviet Union disappeared. The US was unfortunately unable to fully adapt to the new security conditions after the end of the Cold War and this is to some extent true also after 9/11. Conventional air-land warfare forces are still the primary recipient of financial resources in the US and states are still seen as the main adversaries, and there has been a continuous failure to adapt to internal conflicts, non-state threats and preventive measures.¹ However, it would be wrong to claim that there are no changes in military-security policy after 9/11, especially as the battle field seems to have changed for the US.

Looking closer at one of the more threatening sub-regions, the Korean peninsula, we can see some worrisome changes after 9/11 but also possibilities for tension reduction, this especially in relation to changes in US policy. For half a decade America has been a stabilizing factor in the Northeast Asia. This through the active support for democratic and economic development among their allies and in the region at large, and in the defense of the South Korean border against a possible invasion by North Korea. The American presence in the Korean peninsula has been one of the US main operations in the region and changes in the US military-security paradigm will directly affect the security not only in the Korean peninsula but in Northeast Asia in general. The changes in US policy in Korean peninsula is of particular interest since one of two remaining "axis of evil", and arguable the worst according to US perceptions, North Korea, with a possible nuclear capability and prior links to terrorism is situated here. Moreover, Northeast Asia could be argued to be the last remnants of the Cold War, with the largest concentration of troops against one border in the Korean peninsula (close to two million), which occasionally erupts in skirmishes.² Moreover, the military expenditure in Northeast Asia is rapidly increasing as a result of the high level of

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¹ This despite that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) noticed a three times decrease in deaths related to interstate conflicts in the 1990's to 220 000, compared to the 1980's, but there were still some 3.6 million deaths related to internal conflicts in the 1990's (United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2002* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002:11)). This is simply not a problem that only the US suffers from, the international community at large has failed to adapt to the new security threats, both academically as well as policy related strategies (S. Smith, "Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11", *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 48, no. 3, 2004:504-507)).

² *Northeast Asia after 9/11: Regional Trends and U.S. Interests*, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific, Of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Seventh Congress First Session (November 15, 2001, Serial No. 107-52).

tension and low level of trust between the actors in the region.³ A war in the region would threaten both the worlds' security as at least two, potentially three, nuclear powers would be involved in the conflict, and the economic development globally would be reversed as a large part of the economic growth is in Northeast Asia. This makes a destabilization of the region one of the most threatening not only to regional stability, but also to international stability. Therefore it is crucial to understanding the new security environment and the US role in it.

The war on terror and changes in the US military-security paradigm

The 9/11 attack changed the international concepts of military security, and most so in the US that has attempted to transform its military capability and strategy to fight new threats against American security.⁴ There has been a lengthy debate on what the US government should do to face these challenges, as well as what has been accomplished so far.⁵ There is no doubt that the attacks on 9/11 have had a fundamental impact on the security perceptions relating to the military-security paradigm in the US government and the Department of Defense (DoD). We have observed an attempt to shift from fighting conventional air-land war, such as in Iraq, to a greater focus on fighting non-state actors with forward deployed mobile units and protecting the US from further attacks by strengthening homeland security. The importance of winning the *peace* after enemies are defeated militarily to prevent new rouge states and terrorists from emerging, i.e. political and economic reconstruction, has also been noted.⁶ It is however clear that this paradigm shift is coming around slowly and still at least 70 percent of the US military budget is spent on fighting conventional air-land wars while no more than 10 percent is attributed to counter-terrorism and homeland security.⁷ This despite a strong interest in the US government, as well as the Pentagon, to diversify the US military capacity to fit the new military-security paradigm.⁸ However, the perceived need to increase the conventional military capability of the US military from the perspective of Pentagon and the political elite at large was and still is strong. With the Cold war's end, Pentagon personnel and budgets were reduced by 35

³ Elisabeth Sköns, Evamaria Loose-Weintraub, Wuyi Omitoogun and Petter Stålenheim, "Military expenditure", in *SIPRI Yearbook 2000: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴ The terrorist attack in Spain was arguably not seen as a threat to the state to the same extent in Europe as 9/11 was in the US. The reason for this is that the European continent is more used to wanton violence by terrorist organizations such as the Basque and Irish organizations and Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF), and this have become a part of the European daily life to an extent unknown to the US population.

⁵ Jung-Hoon Lee & Chung-in Moon, "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis", *Security Dialogue* (vol. 34, no. 2, 2003:142); Robert A. Scalapino, "Politico-Military Perspectives: Current Concerns in East Asian Security", in *Japan-U.S. Security Relations Post 9/11: Maintaining the Momentum* (The Japan Institute of International Affairs and the Pacific Forum CSIS, March 2002:26); Yoichi Kato, "Impact of 9/11 in the Asia Pacific Region", in *Japan-U.S. Security Relations Post 9/11: Maintaining the Momentum* (The Japan Institute of International Affairs and the Pacific Forum CSIS, March 2002:31); *Security After 9/11: Strategy Choices and Budget Tradeoffs* (Center for Defense Information, Washington D.C., 2003); *The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm> (2004).

⁶ *The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (2004).

⁷ Carl Conetta, *9/11 and the Meanings of Military Transformation*, Project on Defense Alternatives (6 February 2003).

⁸ The bulk of the increase in funding is still going to conventional weapons, for example aircraft carriers, piloted fighter aircraft and heavy mechanized ground forces.

percent from the high points of the 1980s and the mere fact of decreased funding created a felling of vulnerability.⁹

The paradigm shift to smaller forward deployed forces does however not limit the US to fight smaller wars against non-state actors. President Bush has ordered that the US forces should be able to fight on two theaters with *major combat operations* to remove any future threat to the US.¹⁰ This capability will also include the ability to *occupy territory and set the conditions for a regime change*, very much like what is done in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹¹ Therefore the US still need a strong and traditional structure for its military organization, with a focus on air-land war capability. However, America does also need to prepare to win the peace after war, a task they have been less successful in. There is currently a problem of winning the peace in Iraq and Afghanistan, and political and economic reconstruction has turned out to be far more expensive and ties down troops longer than expected.

The distribution of American forces in the war on terror is moreover impacting the US military strategic position and its strategic allocation of human resources geographically. A large amount of the US forces abroad have been locked up in Afghanistan and Iraq, at the “expense” of Europe and Northeast Asia. In the Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2001 (QDR-01) there was also an apparent break with the traditional geographical location of troops. The focus is now to provide a larger base of forces from which to supply smaller forward deployed forces to support long-standing contingency commitments in the critical areas of interest.¹² These bases are beyond Europe and Northeast Asia, such as Kyrgyzstan and to other strategic locations in the war on terror.

While the US initially sought global support through multilateralism in the United Nations (UN) after 9/11, America has now returned to a policy of unilateralism with “redoubled intensity”, and with a focus on “coalitions of the willing”.¹³ The result has been a distancing by the traditional European allies; even if a discussion on the end of the Atlantic alliance most likely is premature. To a lesser degree the “coalitions of the willing” has created a discussion on the support for the US within the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan. This is most apparent in relation to the doctrine of preemption that could effect Northeast Asia directly in the Korean peninsula. The focus on unilateralism, a take it or leave it approach, has as a result created a more ad hoc foreign and military policy of the US. It will be more difficult to predict how much or what kind of international support the US will receive and moreover the support will rely to a higher degree on domestic politics in the potential allied states.¹⁴ Apart from the political risk the focus on unilateralism will also increased economic expenses for the US that now risks being left alone or with few allies in politically sensitive operations. This could further damage the US reputation as it is perceived as a bully and non-cooperative. This moreover creates unpredictability in the international system and changes in the US foreign policy could create new “axis of evil” at the will (and whim) of the administration of the time. A fact that will trouble many states in the world, as they could receive the unwanted attention of the US military or economic sanctions. The US’s

⁹ Carl Conetta, *The Pentagon's New Budget, New Strategy, and New War*, Project on Defense Alternatives, Briefing Report #12 (25 June 2002)

¹⁰ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR-01)* (2001: 21).

¹¹ United States Department of Defense (2001:21).

¹² United States Department of Defense (2001:26).

¹³ Robert A. Scalapino (2002:26); Richard Haass, *Defining U.S. Foreign Policy in a Post-Post-Cold War World*, Arthur Ross Lecture, Remarks to Foreign Policy Association, U.S. Department of State (April 22, 2002).

¹⁴ The US still claims that the focus is on multilateralism, this is unfortunately an multilateralism with fewer allies than ever and increasingly reluctant allies.

unilateralism threatens to create a cleavage between the US and the international system at large which could disrupt US engagement internationally, but also create more intense anti-American sentiments.

Bilateral and multilateral relations in the Korean peninsula

The situation in the Korean peninsula is indirectly affected by the war against terrorism through decreased attention to the situation in Northeast Asia and today the Korean peninsula is viewed as being of secondary importance in the US.¹⁵ It has been noted that the war against terrorism has increased the US attention towards Iraq and Afghanistan in particular and Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia in general as they are key actors in the war against terrorism, but also that “there are no Afghanistans” in Northeast Asia.¹⁶ The Korean peninsula did not harbor any terrorists involved in the 9/11 attack and was therefore perceived as being of secondary importance in relation to the war against terrorism and termination of Al Qaida.¹⁷

In relation to the events of 9/11, there have been important policy changes in the Korean peninsula. It can however be argued that many of the changes that occurred post 9/11 was primarily a creation of factors that were present before 9/11. One of these factors was the incomplete missile deal that the current US administration inherited from the former administration.¹⁸ What was perceived as bad deals with Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK), fear of proliferation, an acute sense of being played and a deep distrust against the North Korean leadership created a perception that the new administration had to act more aggressively towards DPRK. This especially as it could be suspected that the DPRK was in the midst of developing, or even having developed nuclear weapons.¹⁹ This was reinforced by the North Korean “admission” that it was conducting a nuclear weapons program, an admission that was later changed into a policy of “neither confirm nor deny” and a withdrawal from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.²⁰ The initial changes in the US policy towards North Korea were unrelated to the change in US policy after 9/11, but indicated that a toughening of the US policy towards DPRK would emerge. On the contrary, the US action was surprisingly weak. This as North Korea is considered a bona fide rouge state and President Bush has not only termed North Korea as one of the “Axis of Evil” in

¹⁵ Robert Sutter, *Post Cold War Dynamics in East Asia, Recent Developments on the Korean Peninsula, and their Implications for the United States*, The ICAS Lectures, Institute for Korean-American Studies, No. 2001-1011-RGS, October 11, 2001:2; *Northeast Asia after 9/11: Regional Trends and U.S. Interests* (November 15, 2001).

¹⁶ Jane Skanderup, “Conference Summary”, *Japan-U.S. Security Relations Post 9/11: Maintaining the Momentum* (The Japan Institute of International Affairs and the Pacific Forum CSIS, March 2002:20. However, North Korea is still an interesting factor in the combat if terrorism as a potential sponsor through its drug trade and weapons contributor (conventional and unconventional).

¹⁷ North Korea has been trying to draw attention to its demands by raising the stakes, just as the US are trying to downplay the North Korean threat in the domestic and international arena. The problem is that the higher the stakes are the less inclined the US will be to negotiate as it perceives this as “nuclear blackmail”.

¹⁸ Jung-Hoon Lee & Chung-in Moon (2003:142).

¹⁹ Hearing of the Senate of the Senate Armed Services Committee Subject: Future Worldwide Threats to U.S. national Security Chaired By: Senator John Warner (R-VA) Witnesses: Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet; and Defense Intelligence Agency Director Vice Admiral Lowell Jacoby (Washington, D.C., March 9, 2004).

²⁰ Walter Pincus & Glenn Kessler, “N. Korea Restarts Nuclear Facility; U.S. Expects 2nd Site to Go Online”, *The Washington Post*, (27 February 2003:A23); Feffer, John, *North Korea, South Korea: U.S. Policy at a Time of Crisis* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

his state of the union speech in January 2002, but North Korea is also one of the few states that has the capacity and possibly the political willingness to export nuclear weapons or components to terrorists.²¹ Despite this North Korea and the Korean peninsula was deemphasized, in disregard of its potential impact on American security, i.e. non-proliferations and the terrorist perspective.

North Korea is of the outmost importance for the US and its neighbors for three major reasons; it is a traditional security threat to its neighbors due to its convention and WMD capability; the collapse of North Korea would create a humanitarian disaster of hunger and refugees outpour; and finally it constitutes a non-conventional threat in regard to proliferation of WMD to state and non-state actors alike. The US regards a North Korean attack on South Korea a possibility. It is evident that this would require a military response by the US in order to assist its allies in Northeast Asia.²² This would be unfortunate for the US, as much of its resources are tied down in other conflicts. The US reluctance to act even more aggressively or even militarily in the Korean peninsula is also a result of the possible second strike capability that North Korea possess and the damage it can inflict on American and South Korean troops. It is in addition deeply worried about the Chinese position and possible Chinese intervention, as in the 1950's, to defend Chinese interests in the Korean peninsula. Moreover, the fear of regional destabilization that would force the US to focus on three major conflicts and the financial implications of such engagement and the negative effect on the regional and global economy are factors that works in favor for status quo.

South Korean - US relations have experienced some difficulty the last few years and the anti-American sentiments are increasingly worrisome from a political perspective. The US has not been overly appreciative of the South Korean attempts to engage North Korea, and in some cases the US has been stalemating the process.²³ South Korea's focus has been on engaging DPRK and it does not even view North Korea as the "prime enemy", but has focused on cooperation with DPRK for a long time.²⁴ There is no doubt that the different political agendas have played a role in the latest development and questioning of the US-ROK alliance, but even so the US-ROK alliance has been very successful and is sometimes termed as the most successful for the US. South Korea has supported the US in its war against terrorism, even though the initial response was not the expected one when South Korea offered only 450 non-combatative troops to Iraq. Recently though South Korea has assigned 3,000 troops to Iraq, but this move is perceived by many Americans as an attempt by ROK to guarantee that the US will not weaken its defense of South Korea rather than a full hearted support.²⁵ It is in no way wrong to say that the US-South-Korean relations have been better, especially as the US is arming a, what many in South Korea fear, militaristic Japan and has refused to accept a more open engagement with DPRK. Moreover, stronger nationalistic tendencies in South Korea, especially among the younger generation, have resulted in a questioning of the power structures in the region, and then especially the role of

²¹ It should be note that in mid-2001 negotiations where undergoing to remove North Korea after 9/11 from the US State Departments terrorist list. This was delayed as the situation required further investigations as North Korea has engaged in terrorist acts earlier, for example in 1982 South Koreans where attacked in Burma and in 1987 when a South Korea airliner where targeted.

²² Yoichi Kato (2002:31).

²³ It should be noted that the sunshine policy has many critics in more conservative circles in South Korea, and the investments in North Korea is still for the most part on paper and is waiting implementation.

²⁴ Koji Murata "US Military Strategy and East Asia", *Asia-Pacific Review* (vol. 10, no. 2, 2003:55).

²⁵ Robert Burns, "Rumsfeld assures South Korea that ending US 'tripwire' role will not weaken its defense", *AP Breaking News* (November 17, 2003).

the US.²⁶ This might lead to that a withdrawal of the US forces will not meet a strong opposition from the South Korean public, as has been expected by many.

In regard to Northeast Asia at large there are some aspects of American engagement that will impact the Korean peninsula indirectly and directly. The first is the relationship with China. Directly after 9/11 the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) issued on September 30, 2001 gave a harsh view of the US relationship with China. It stated, for example, that the United States “is more susceptible to large-scale military competition”, a reference directed to China.²⁷ More important is the US engagement in Taiwan, and a possible conflict between America and China over the status of Taiwan. A military conflict between mainland China and Taiwan is a probability (even if not high) and would be the most likely reason for a Sino-American conflict in Asia today. The prospects for a conflict were particularly apparent after the EP-3 (the Sino-US air collision between a US spy plane (EP-3) and a Chinese fighter) incident only weeks before 9/11 when Sino-US relations reached a low point. On the other hand there have been positive signs of increased cooperation between China and the US after 9/11, especially in relation to the war on terror.²⁸ There have even been arguments along the line that the Sino-US relationship has never been better than during their cooperation against international terrorism.²⁹ The honeymoon after 9/11, when all states cooperated against international, and national, terrorism, did however end soon afterwards when disagreements over form and practice were noticed. China, for example, is far from satisfied with the presence of American troops in Central Asia and what they perceive as another attempt of containment from the US.³⁰ More alarmingly is however the US weapons sales to Taiwan and the possibility to change the “strategic ambiguity” policy vis-à-vis Taiwan.³¹ This has created more than some skepticism towards America and China feels that it has not received enough in return for its support for the US's war against terrorism. A faltering relationship between the US and China will have repercussions on the Korean peninsula as they are both key actors in the conflict. Since China is DPRKs only ally, even of

²⁶ Peter Rixton, *The Implications of a US military drawdown in Korea*, Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Section, Australian Parliamentary Library (Research Note no. 5 2004-5, 2004).

²⁷ United States Department of Defense (2001:4).

²⁸ China condemned international terrorism and supported the US war against terrorism from the start by voting for the anti-terrorism resolutions in the U.N. Security Council, signing the International Convention for the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism. It directed the Shanghai APEC meeting towards the war on terror instead of reviewing the Chinese economic miracle, and the standing committee of China's National People's Congress has ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. However, the US and Chinese agendas are not necessarily compatible in all aspects and there is increasingly differences in the approach towards terrorism, and what is terrorism. Catharin Dalpino & Bates Gill, “Northeast Asia in 2001-2002: New Opportunities, New Uncertainties” in Catharin Dalpino & Bates Gill (eds.), *Brookings Northeast Asia Survey 2001-2002* (The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., 2002:vi-vii).

²⁹ It should be noted that it was virtually impossible to deny the US assistance in their war against terrorism after the brutal attack on innocent civilians on 9/11 and that the Chinese cooperation filled vital purposes for China. First of all it diverted the negative attention from the US to China towards the war against terrorism and China proved to the US that it was able to cooperate and not only compete. Secondly China used the war on terror to gain advantages in its strikes against Muslim minorities in China, militant or not. It also tried, in vain, to make the US accept that terrorism, extremism and separatism was equaled which would in its more extreme interpretation indicate that Taiwan should be treated in the same fashion as Al Qaida.

³⁰ Niklas Swanström, “The Prospects of Multilateral Conflict Prevention in Central Asia”, *Central Asian Survey* (vol. 23, no. 1, 2004).

³¹ President Bush has claimed that he considers the US to have an obligation to defend Taiwan and that he would use “whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself”. Catharin Dalpino & Bates Gill (eds.), *Brookings Northeast Asia Survey 2001-2002* (The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., 2002:34, 37, 48).

reluctantly, they have a better position to influence North Korea and in cooperation with ROK and the US China could convince DPRK to accept a new deal. The Chinese are however reluctant to let the Americans have too much influence in the political development in DPRK and strives to decrease its influence in the peninsula at large. Increased tension between China and the US will make China increasingly reluctant to assist in the negotiations and without the Chinese leverage it will be virtually impossible to force the North Koreans to a negotiated settlement.³²

After 9/11 the US-Japan relations have become remarkably good at a governmental level. This is a result of the quick response in the war against terrorism and the monetary and logistic support from Japan. The US-Japan relations seem to be strengthened in terms of political and military cooperation, this especially as the “peace constitution” has decreased in practical importance. 9/11 has brought Japan closer to what could be termed a “normal” country as it has begun to act more freely in military issues with an greater mandate for its self-defense forces. This however has not been viewed well in China, DPRK or ROK.³³ Lee Kuang Yew warned in 1991 that allowing Japan to participate in minesweeping operations during the Gulf War was like giving liqueur chocolate to an alcoholic, and this is the hangover for Japans neighbors.³⁴ However, it is a reality that the Japanese self-defense force is increasingly taking a stronger role in international as well as regional affairs, which has impacted the relationship between Japan and its neighbors and potentially Japans role in the Korean peninsula.

Intra-regional relations in Northeast Asia have improved greatly over the last decade, with all actors more integrated in the regional community. In many respects the regional environment is more stable than it has been in ages. There are however still very little trust between the different states in Northeast Asia and political integration and cooperation is limited. Moreover, there are still strong anti-Japanese sentiments both in China and the two Koreas, and the increasing nationalism in China and South Korea have not improved political relations with Japan.³⁵ The interaction in Northeast Asia can be characterized as economic interdependence without political cooperation. Strikingly, there are no *regional* organizations in Northeast Asia as there is little trust and confidence between the actors in the region. The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), Six-party talks and ASEAN+3 are, for example, made functional due to outside participation. This has made every regional attempt to engage North Korea very difficult. There are however some positive signs of increased multilateralism and regional attempts to conflict management and prevention in the region. ASEAN+3 and the Tumen River Development Program are two important examples of an increasingly independent Northeast Asian posture in regional affairs, even if external participation is evident in both organizations. One of the most alarming deficits of regional cooperation is that there is no evident regional leader. Japan is disqualified for historical reasons, China is feared, North Korea is unable to obtain such a

³² Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?”, *Korean Journal of International Studies* (No. 1, 2004).

³³ Jacques DeLisle, “Asia’s Shifting Strategic Landscape: Long-Term Trends and the Impact of 9/11”, E-notes, *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (November 26, 2003).

³⁴ Deng Young, “The Asianization of East Asian Security and the United States’ Role”, *East Asia: An International Quarterly* (1998, Autumn).

³⁵ Niklas Swanström, “Conflict Management in Northeast Asia”, *Korean Journal of International Studies* (vol. 30, no. 1, 2003); Junichiro Koizumi’s visit to the hotly debated Yasunuki Shrine, revision of textbooks in regard to the occupation of Korea and China had a direct impact on the relations with China and the Koreans. Catharin Dalpino & Bates Gill (eds.), *Brookings Northeast Asia Survey 2001-2002* (2002:vi-vii, 28-29).

position for ideological reasons and South Korea is too weak in relation to China and Japan. South Korea's relative weakness might on the other hand be a reason for why South Korea could take a leading role in integration and cooperation, as neither Japan nor China views South Korea as a military threat.

Impact on the Korean peninsula

The principal issues for the US in the Korean peninsula before and after 9/11 remain the same; i.e. nuclear proliferation and controlling an unpredictable North Korea.³⁶ This even if the mode of interaction in the Korean peninsula and the policy debates concerning it has changed significantly in the US. The integration between states and multilateral cooperation that Haass and Kelly speak about is nowhere to be seen in the US policy in the Korean peninsula, and for the most part the US has put the Korean peninsula on the backburner in its foreign policy. This has however not changed the ultimate goal of creating a nuclear free Korean peninsula.³⁷ North Korea was prior to 9/11 classified as a risky, possibly the main, exporter of weapons of mass destruction and such technology to non-state actors and rouge states.³⁸ As a result the US participated in several multilateral and bilateral negotiations with the North Koreans. The negotiations were stalemated as the US asked DPRK to fulfill the US demands of nuclear disarmament without fulfilling what the North Koreans claims to be legitimate security concerns and to sign a non-aggression pact with the US.³⁹ In light of the destiny of one third of the axils of evil (Iraq), North Korea views a non-aggression pact as a necessity for its own survival. President Bush has repeatedly argued that they US will attack any threat to the US pre-emptively at a time of their choosing and on their own terms, but also that they will not attack North Korea. Despite the references to a peaceful resolution, DPRK perceives this a possible reference for an attack on North Korea as the trust for America is absent. It is evident that some agreement has to be made to guarantee the security of North Korea if a constructive negotiation will resume. It is however unlikely that President Bush will sign a non-aggression pact; and if he would the resistance from the US Senate would be prohibitive as the trust for the North Korean leadership is very low after what has been perceived as "nuclear blackmail" in earlier negotiations. This is accentuated by DPRK's non-constructive actions and open defiance of international agreements in general and the US in particular. A major drawback is also that South Korean, Chinese and Japanese concerns has not been taken into consideration in the US policy preparation, which can partly explain the slow progress seen in North Korea.

³⁶ Jane Skanderup (March 2002). President Bush policy is however very different from the Clinton administrations policy. China is now seen as a strategic competitor rather than a partner and the language against North Korea hardened with President Bush, even if North Korea decreased in importance after 9/11. Koji Murata (2003).

³⁷ Richard Haass (April 22, 2002); James Kelly, *Dealing With North Korea's Nuclear Programs*, Statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC (July 15, 2004).

³⁸ Robert Sutter (October 11, 2001:5-6).

³⁹ James Kelly, *Six-Party Talks*, Opening Remarks Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC (March 2, 2004); James Kelly, *Remarks on Day One of the Second Round of Six-Party Talks*, Beijing, China (February 25, 2004); Richard L. Armitage, *Weapons of Mass Destruction Developments on the Korean Peninsula*, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC (February 4, 2003); Mitchell Reiss, *North Korea's Legacy of Missed Opportunities*, Remarks to the Heritage Foundation, Washington D.C. (March 12, 2004).

The US attitude towards DPRK has been tougher and the US policy is characterized by the lack of direct contacts with DPRK, in contrast to the preferred policy by China and South Korea to engage North Korea bilaterally and multilaterally. Continued discussions in the Six-party talks are increasingly dependent on the efforts of the Northeast Asian states, particularly China and South Korea. However, this need not be a negative development, as many conservatives have pointed out in the US; the security of Northeast Asia is best dealt with by Asians. China and South Korea is much closer to each other in policy approaches towards North Korea. Japan supports the US policy reluctantly, as it could be a target of North Korean attacks triggered by US disengagement and a continued conflict could create tension with its North Korean minority.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, there is still a strong dependency on America as trust is low and cooperative mechanisms within Northeast Asia are largely dependent on US participation. A *decreased* reliance on the US could however potentially result in better communication with DPRK, but there are also risks involved, such as the emergence of a power vacuum, regional nuclearization and a regional power struggle.

Regardless of what some neo-conservatives in the US have argued for, the policy of President Bush is not to destroy or force North Korea to a collapse. This simply out of a realist calculation of the possible consequences of such an incident, i.e. a preventive attack on South Korea and Japan by a North Korea in chaos. However, the personal antagonism between President Bush and Kim Jong-ill is troubling and creates tension and an environment of non-cooperation in the Korean peninsula⁴¹ The personal antagonism between the leaders has been ongoing since President Bush took office. The negative effects of this have been directly notable and the policy to meet with North Koreans “anytime, anywhere” as President Bush claimed he would implement have not been tried. Fruitful communication is diluted by the position of the Bush administration which by accepting President Bush personal antagonism against Kim Jong-ill has made further cooperation impossible.⁴² Lack of constructive dialogue between America and North Korea is however not a major change in the region, but rather a continuation of a bad track record, even if President Clinton adopted a had somewhat different approach.⁴³

The single most important change in the Korean peninsula that has been initiated after 9/11 was the redeployment of 3600 American troops from the de-militarized zone to Iraq, and the larger redeployment of American forces from the demilitarized zone, the so called trip wire, to South of Seoul to Osan and Pyungtaek. This has initiated the removal of

⁴⁰ Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?” (2004). In contrast to what many American policy-makers seems to believe in the US China is very reluctant to see North Korea develop a nuclear capacity, not only for the unpredictability of the North Korean government, but more so because if North Korea develops a nuclear capability so will with a certainty South Korea and Japan and that threatens the Chinese security.

⁴¹ Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?” (2004); Jane Skanderup (March 2002:14); Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Chinese Influence on the DPRK Negotiations”, *Peace Review* (16:2 July, 2004); Jon B. Wolfsthal, “How Sincere Is the US Offer to Negotiate With Pyongyang?”, *Munhwa Ilbo* (July 13, 2004); Fineman, Howard, “I Sniff Some Politics”, *Newsweek* (27 May, 2002); Glenn Kessler, “N. Korea Continues Criticism of Bush”, *Washington Post* (August 25, 2004). They have called each other pygmy, dictator, human trash, fascist and variations of these themes.

⁴² John Bolton, “Speedy North Korean Nuclear Dismantlement Possible, Bolton Says”, *International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State* (July 23, 2004); John Bolton, “Bolton Urges North Korea to Follow Libya’s Example on Weapons”, *International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State* (July 21, 2004); Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?” (2004); Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Chinese Influence on the DPRK Negotiations” (2004).

⁴³ Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?” (2004).

large numbers of US troops from South Korea, a fact that will have security implications for the Korean peninsula.⁴⁴ This is partly based on US engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan but also on domestic policy concerns. The neo-conservatives in the US argue that Asian security is for Asians to secure, and that neither American lives nor money should be spent to do others' business, if it is not a direct threat to the US security.⁴⁵ A reduction of troops in South Korea has been expected and the redeployment of 3600 US troops to Iraq from South Korea was the first step. The South Korean government sought assurances that the 3600 troops that had been stationed in Iraq will be redeployed to the de-militarized zone (DMZ) after their mission is concluded. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz has however said that "We have moved troops off of the DMZ, where frankly, they were performing nothing except, a kind of useless -- and indeed I would say counterproductive -- tripwire function".⁴⁶ This indicates that the redeployed troops will not return to the demilitarized zone after Iraq, and possibly not even to South Korea, after its service in Iraq.

Pentagon has stated that it will only leave 24,500 troops in the country by 2008 and redeploy the 14,000 troops currently based in the demilitarized zone.⁴⁷ The withdrawal of the US troops from the de-militarized zone will be completed by 2008 when all of the US 2nd Infantry Division that is currently patrolling the region north of Seoul will have redeployed to south of Seoul.⁴⁸ The redeployment was originally thought to be initiated in 2005-2006 and completed first by 2011 but with increasing anti-American feelings and increased tension over North Korean nuclear possession the US has settled for an earlier date.⁴⁹

The US redeployment has come to question the engagement of the US and the status of the ROK-US alliance. However, it can also be argued that the US has too much engagement in the Korean peninsula. In spring 2002, the "Nuclear Posture Review" from DoD was leaked – this review contemplated the usage of small nuclear weapons to penetrate tunnels or deep bunkers in North Korea. This was military assistance that the South Koreans and the Japanese was less impressed by as it only increased tension with DPRK. DPRK saw this as preparation for preemptive war; this in combination with the American redeployment from the demilitarized zone has made DPRK worried about the US intentions. It has been argued that this could potentially be seen as a first step by the US to move American troops out of danger if it is preparing an preemptively attack on North Korea.⁵⁰ The new position of the US troops would give them a better second strike capacity as the troops in the

⁴⁴ Jim Lobe, "US To Withdraw Forces From South Korea", *Information Clearing House* (US) (September 29, 2004); Gerry Gilmore, "U.S. Plan to Shift Korea Forces Still a 'Go'", *American Forces Press Service* (April 1, 2004). It has been argued by the Pentagon that this redeployment is only positioning the American troops to counter attack more effectively. Robert Burns (November 17, 2003). Kim Tae Woo, senior research fellow at the government-affiliated Korea Institute of Defense Analyses has claimed that the strategy is the first to the "phasing down of the [South Korea]-US alliance." Donald Kirk, "US redeployments to Iraq rattle South Korean alliance", *The Christian Science Monitor* (May 20, 2004). This is in line with the neo-conservatives wishes to decrease military engagement and costs in Northeast Asia.

⁴⁵ This view is contrasted to the more traditional view, that this is a matter of America's reputation among its allies (the few that is left) and the importance of the American assistance to the international community (to secure American interests).

⁴⁶ *Agence France-Presse*, US 'tripwire' role in South Korea obsolete: Wolfowitz (May 18, 2004).

⁴⁷ 5000 troops will leave South Korea this year, 3000 in 2005, 2000 in 2006 and 2,500 in 2007 and 2008. This is an improvement since the first plan by Pentagon to pull out a third of its troops by the end of 2005. *BBC News*, "US agrees to slow S Korea pull-out" (October 6, 2004).

⁴⁸ Gerry Gilmore (April 1, 2004).

⁴⁹ Jaewoo Choo, "Moves afoot: US strategy in Korea" *Asia Times Online* (August 16, 2003).

⁵⁰ Ted Galen "Carpenter, Korea: Ominous removal of America's 'tripwire'", *Information Clearing House* (US) (June 12, 2003).

demilitarized zone or in Seoul would face substantial losses in the first strike and possibly lose its counter strike capacity.

The consequences of the redeployment of US troops will be substantial for South Korea and the stability on the Korean peninsula. First of all, redeployment means that the costs of defense will be greatly increased for South Korea. Current levels of 2.7-3.2 % of GDP will be greatly exceeded if the current level of defense will be sustained and if the military force is to increase it will require that alarmingly high proportions of the GDP is invested into the military. However, in light of the withdrawal the US has sent state-of-the-art military equipment for the estimated value of \$ 11 billion to strengthen the US defense against a nuclear crisis in ROK.⁵¹ Despite that the US government has repeatedly claimed that it has no intention to attack it will seem to the North Koreans as though the US is building up the defenses at the same time as they are redeploying their troops for a better strategic location for a counter attack. Several South Korean researchers and military staff have claimed that the influx of large amounts of high-tech weapons in the South could be destabilizing for the Korean peninsula and it is likely that such change could cause a stir in North Korea, with unknown consequences. Chances for an outright war are, on the other side, slim right now as all parties are relatively weak or engaged in other conflicts which have decreased their interest in opening up a new theater. It is however evident that a simple redeployment of troops will create a feeling of uncertainty that is uncomfortable for all parties concerned and an American withdrawal from South Korea will create a power vacuum that no actor to date is ready to fill.

On the positive side the South Korean military commanders will also be responsible for the defense of South Korea. Prior to the redeployment of the US forces the South Korean forces in the demilitarized zone has been subordinated to the US command and the United Nations Joint Security Office.⁵² This could indicate a more coordinated policy between the military and the political establishment in South Korea. Earlier political attempts by South Korea to initiate a dialogue with DPRK have been effectively stalemated by the military and political agendas in America.⁵³ Moreover, China, North Korea and Russia would feel more comfortable with South Korean troops in ROK and it could possibly assist in new military confidence building efforts between North and South Korea. There is however a problem with the power vacuum that needs to be resolved and there is a need for a multilateral discussion on how to deal with military security and nuclear proliferation in the region. Both South Korea and Japan would feel that the acquisition of nuclear weapons would be necessary to defend themselves against nuclear China and North Korea. If Japan acquired nuclear weapons to counter the Chinese and North Korean nuclear possessions, South Korea would follow. A nuclear Japan is more likely to be perceived as a greater threat to China and South Korea than a nuclear North Korea. Any changes in the military balance are however distressful as it could create a perception of a "window of opportunity" for preemptive attacks and nuclear proliferation.

The reason for the US to deploy the forces to the south of Korea and out of ROK could be militarily, but most likely they are budgetary and results of domestic politics in the

⁵¹ *United States Department of Defense*, "U.S., Republic of Korea Reach Agreement on Troop Redeployment", (October 6, 2004); Koo Kab-Woo, "The Reality Behind South Korean-US Alliance", *Nautilus Institute, Policy Forum* (March 12, 2004:5); Robert Marquand, *The Christian Science Monitor* (July 1, 2003).

⁵² Jaewoo Choo (August 16, 2003).

⁵³ Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, "Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?" (2004); Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, "Chinese Influence on the DPRK Negotiations" (2004).

US. DPRK could however get the impression that they have “scared” the US of with the acquired nuclear ability.⁵⁴ This could have a devastating impact on continued negotiations with North Korea as they might raise the stakes for cooperation. It has also been argued that the changes are conscious efforts to make it more difficult for President Roh Moo-hyun, whose softer line toward DPRK has irritated some in the US administration. In interviews with conservatives delegates Jim Lobe was told that “If we get our troops out of range of the North's guns, our freedom of action for acting against the North is greater. And if Roh gets worried about being left to the tender mercies of Kim Jong-Il, that gives us more influence.”⁵⁵ The statement is rather harsh and is a direct threat to independent South Korean policy towards North Korea. The reason behind the unfortunate claim is that the South Korean “Sunshine policy” was rejected by the US, and the Bush administration has done everything (in practice) to prevent further communications between DPRK and ROK.⁵⁶ As a result this will give the US military more leverage in ROK until the South Korean military forces have adjusted for the US redeployment. It is however unlikely that this would be the reason for the US redeployment.

The redeployment of troops is likely to increase in speed if the US engagement in (former) rouge states, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, continues to drain financial resources for the US. It is an unsustainable situation for the US economy to keep too many troops under arms for a prolonged time. A continuation of the current policy will result in the withdrawal of sections of the US military forces in allied countries, and Northeast Asia and Europe seems to be the preferred regions of exit. This will raise an important question of the willingness of the US to stand by its allies. It currently looks as when the US is in trouble in Iraq they cut troops in Northeast Asia. It is important for the US to reassure its allies that this is not the case, or we will see a reevaluation of the US as an allied force.

For China and Japan, security has decreased somewhat in Northeast Asia and specifically in the Korean peninsula as the US has directed its attention towards other regions. The general structure of the conflicts are however the same, i.e. the Korean peninsula, nuclear proliferation and the Taiwan straits.⁵⁷ A perceived withdrawal of American troops is neither in China's nor Japan's interest. China fears that South Korea and especially Japan will strengthen their own forces and even possibly acquire nuclear weapons if the North Korean nuclear development can not be stalled.⁵⁸ Japan feels far more comfortable under American military protection than under an unclear military arrangement where the Chinese would be the far strongest actor in the short and long term. All the Northeast Asian states will be forced to deal with increased financial commitments to the military if the US withdraws and the tension continues. American presence in the region has provided for security, but maybe more importantly it has kept down the military expenditure for Japan and South Korea. Filling a power vacuum in the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia at large will be costly for economic development in the region. Whether or not it is admitted, the US has been a guarantor of stability since the 1950's and in practice kept down military

⁵⁴ Jon Wolfstahl, “Wrong Time to Cut Troops in Korea”, Carnegie Analysis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (June 07, 2004); Jon Wolfstahl, “U.S. Sends a wrong signal to North Korea”, *International Herald Tribune* (May 31, 2004).

⁵⁵ Jim Lobe (September 29, 2004).

⁵⁶ Robert Sutter (October 11, 2001:3).

⁵⁷ Yoichi Kato (2002:34).

⁵⁸ For a development of the Chinese position in the Korean peninsula see: Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Chinese Influence on the DPRK Negotiations” (2004); Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, “Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?” (2004).

spending. If the US withdrawal takes up phase there will be an increased military expenditure in Northeast Asia to meet new challenges in an uncertain region that risk destabilizing the Korean peninsula.

Effects on the stability of the Korean peninsula

As have been mentioned, the American withdrawal from the demilitarized zone could potentially be seen as a first step by President Bush to move American troops out of danger if he is preparing a preemptive attack on North Korean nuclear installations. The dangers of such a strike would be tremendous and there are few people outside the US that would argue that such an action would destroy the North Korean second strike capacity against South Korea and Japan. The reluctance in China, South Korea and Japan against the thought of preventive strikes is without doubt strong. Yet, the possibility still needs to be considered and there are some authors that have argued that it is only natural to assume that the United States would take decisive military action of some sort against North Korea, if connections with terrorists are in fact found.⁵⁹ There is far more evidence that North Korea has a better nuclear capacity than Iraq ever had and, according to the US, DPRK has been trading indiscriminately with weapons.⁶⁰ Unless North Korea attacks South Korea, the US would, in all likelihood, not attack DPRK. This considering the two front war that the US is engaged in and the amount of troops that is tied down there and the costs involved in these operations. A further deterrent for a US attack would be the devastation caused by the North Korean army, which although having drawbacks, is still sizable.

In most aspects the American foreign policy towards to the Korean peninsula has largely failed after 9/11, this in the perspective that the only rouge and possibly failing state, with nuclear ambitions and strong links to terrorists fell of the US radar screen after 9/11. President Bush and the current US administration have merely engaged North Korea in exchanges of insults and no-go invitations. This is not to say that the blame is solely on the US, North Korea has similarly engaged in activities that have stalemated the bilateral talks between North Korea and America and unfortunately this has also made multilateral discussions more difficult. It is understandably that the US focus has been on Afghanistan, and the conflict with Al Qaida after the attack on 9/11. However, it is difficult to understand the US position toward North Korea; even of the US disinterest have had positive effects for status quo as the DPRK as it has not been treated in the same way as other rouge states (Iraq). This is a discrepancy in the US post-9/11 policy that North Korea has not been sufficiently acknowledged, a fact that could create future problems. The US position not to engage Pyongyang have left North Korea with little incentives to continue a process within the Six-party talks and today South Korean and Chinese efforts are what barely keeps the process afloat. The US relative disengagement from the Korean peninsula does not only create new security problems in the region, it also poses the question of the US resolution to deal with nuclear proliferation and its willingness to continue the military alliances with South Korea and Japan.

Rapid redeployments, or even the perceptions of this, could create insecurity and a perceived need for preemptive actions from Pyongyang, especially as they could view this as a tactical maneuver to position their troops better for an attack. With the US engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan which takes up critical proportions of the US military forces the US

⁵⁹ Yoichi Kato (March 2002:31).

⁶⁰ Richard L. Armitage (February 4, 2003); Mitchell Reiss (March 12, 2004).

looks weakened, but it would however take a great deal of misperceptions from DPRK before they would attack preemptively as they know full well that they will not be able to win a war despite US distraction. South Korea's military readiness is as prohibitive as the US presence and the ongoing redeployment will not affect the overall ability to strike against North Korea.

Improvements are possible as there seems to be a unanimous agreement that a military conflict with North Korea is the least wanted outcome, even if voices have been raised in Pentagon defending a war in the Korean peninsula. It is unlikely that the US will act aggressively in the Korean peninsula, despite the fact that President Bush has termed North Korea one of the axis of evil. This is regardless, or because, of that North Korea is a rouge state that has developed a nuclear capability long ago and has a military capability greater than Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶¹ Looking at the Bush administrations' policy towards rouge, non-democratic, terrorist sponsoring states that seek nuclear capability North Korea would have been invaded or forced to change according to the military-security doctrine developed after 9/11. Now the US seems to withdraw from the Korean peninsula and has decreased its interaction in Northeast Asia at large, as a consequence of its engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. The reality is that the situation in the Korean peninsula is different and far more delicate than the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. North Korea has for long been on the list of terrorism sponsoring states, but very little has been done. This places the Korean peninsula outside the 9/11 strategies, and North Korea is treated more along classical terms of containment. This even though the US and its allies has noted that North Korea can not only arm potential terrorists with both conventional and unconventional arms, but is also engaged in a significant narcotics trade that threatens American interests, not to mention South Korean and Japanese interests as two of the most important export markets.

A fact that has tended to "escape" the US, is that China has shown to be more cooperative when dealing with North Korea, a fact that is seen in its dealings with the Six-party talks and in China's bilateral negotiations with DPRK.⁶² Despite China's reluctance to allow American troops at the Korean-Chinese border or to let the US destabilize North Korea it has to a large degree been assisting the US and ROK in the negotiations. In many ways the Chinese policy is similar to the South Korean "Sunshine policy". This is partly due to the fact that China does not want to see a nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia, but also because it feels like it has not received anything in return from a long and at times troubling relation with North Korea.⁶³ China has provided North Korea with essentials such as oil,

⁶¹ Jacques DeLisle (November 26, 2003).

⁶² In 2003, China increased its pressure on DPRK and it was made very clear that if the North Koreans did not change position, China might reconsider its "would not support" position on sanctions (towards a harder one). High level delegations were sent to DPRK and vice versa, and the Chinese message was clear: stop the provocations or suffer the consequences. PRC did also at one point close the oil pipeline supplying oil to DPRK for three days due to "technical difficulties" to make the seriousness of its position clear. The Chinese pressure ultimately led to a trilateral meeting held in Beijing 23-24 April, a compromise between the preference of DPRK for bilateral talks and the US for multilateral talks, and an opportunity for China to increase its influence. Fong Leslie "China washes hands of N. Korea's antics", *Straits Times* (5 April 2003); Pomfret John, "China Urges N. Korea Dialogue; Beijing Sees Risk of Losing Influence in Area Vital to Security", *The Washington Post* (4 April 2004:16); *The Economist*, "Desperate straits - North Korea's desperate reliance on China.", *The Economist* (3 May 2003); Watts Jonathan, "China plays key role in Korea talks - Bringing America to table raises profile of Asia's economic power.", *The Guardian* (23 April 2003:15).

⁶³ Samuel Kim and Tao Hwan Lee, "Chinese-North Korean relations: Managing Asymmetrical Interdependence", in *North Korea and Northeast Asia*, eds. Samuel S. Kim and Tai Hwan Lee (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002:109-133).

food stuff etc, for a long time and has been its only ally, but has received very little in return.⁶⁴ This is something that China has become tired of and has over time successively been putting more pressure on North Korea. The Chinese position is an opportunity both for the US and South Korea. Strategic cooperation between South Korea, China and the US in an attempt to open up North Korea, create economic development and nuclear disarmament. This is of course only possible if the North Korean security considerations are meet to a degree that would make DPRK ready to work together with the US and North Korea's neighbors.

A future of peace or conflict in the Korean peninsula?

The withdrawal of the US forces from the demilitarized zone and potentially from the Korean peninsula will create a power vacuum and instability, but also opportunities, as the security situation will change. It can even go as far as if the US willingness to stand together with its allies is further distrusted; South Korea and Japan might develop their own nuclear capability to defend themselves from a nuclear North Korea, and to some extent from China. On the other hand decreased US military presence creates new opportunities for a peaceful development of Northeast Asia. China, South Korea, and to a certain extent Japan, share similar visions of how to deal with North Korea by integration and engagement. The US has adopted a non-cooperative approach, despite a shared vision with the Northeast Asian states, save possibly DPRK, of a nuclear free Korean peninsula. This has disassociated the US from the other government's strategies and prevented a positive dialogue in the region. The Northeast Asian governments have leaned towards a policy of engagement and stabilization of North Korea, rather than increased demands and criticism.⁶⁵ Decreased US engagement could therefore be a start of a regional attempt to political and economic integration along peaceful lines, which is very much what the neo-conservatives in the US have argued that the Asians should develop by themselves. However, it is clear that a rapid redeployment of US troops in the Korean peninsula might create an uncertainty that would not be in the interest of the region. This as the US has been the provider of stability for a long time and the Northeast Asian states need time to develop security arrangements to sustain a peaceful situation.

The American policy of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is at risk in the Korean peninsula and beyond as it has taken a very different position in North Korea than in Iraq and other states. This could create confusion about the US intent in this area, which could "force" new states to acquire nuclear weapons. There are currently three possibilities for the US in regard to nuclear proliferation. One alternative would be for the US to go after the nuclear technology and possible weapons in North Korea and if so their policy would still have credibility in multilateral forums. They could also revert their policy and continue to allow North Korea to develop nuclear weapons. This would not only destroy all multilateral forums (due to the importance of the US) but also probably force Japan and South Korea to develop nuclear weapons to defend themselves against a nuclear North Korea. Finally, they could unilaterally act against rouge states on a bilateral basis after their own liking which

⁶⁴ Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, "Can China Untie the Gordian Knot in North Korea?" (2004); Niklas Swanström & Mikael Weissmann, "Chinese Influence on the DPRK Negotiations" (2004).

⁶⁵ This is not to say the North Korean has not deserved criticism, it has in many ways. However, this might not be the right way to deal with North Korea, but the Bush administration has a point in that bad behavior should not be rewarded. The question is according to who's standards and how?

would not only destroy multilateral engagements but create a distrust of American policy in the question. This especially as they have allowed the development of nuclear weapons in some cases, such as Israel, but not in others. The current position is between the first and third policy and increasingly there is problematic to understand why Iraq is invaded under the pretext of nuclear weapons yet with no evidence of this, and North Korea is treated with silk gloves and could even be exporting nuclear technology or components. The consequences for the Korean peninsula are great whatever strategy is chosen. Disengagement would cause the Korean peninsula to go nuclear and too much engagement from the US might trigger a military conflict. Regardless of choice there is a risk to open Pandora's Box and further destabilize the region. The long term effects are however much better with a nuclear free Korean peninsula, both from a security perspective and a financial perspective as a nuclear race would cost the regional states dearly.

The current US security policy and military strategies in the Korean peninsula seem to be under some stress, due to political pressure when it comes to budgets, anti-American pressure in South Korea and Japan, isolationist tendencies and an extended war against terrorism. These are policies that clash and create an unpredictable US foreign policy which puts its allies (South Korea and Japan) at the mercy of short-term gains rather than long-term planning. American policy in the Korean peninsula has not worked in favor of regional agendas and the US-North Korean stalling of communication has increased the problems for South Korea and China to continue a sincere, or even some kind of dialogue. The current strategy of the US is one of disengagement and increased reliance on the Northeast Asian states to take charge of their own problems. If there is no negotiations the North Korean will feel that they have no options but to develop nuclear deterrent. Therefore it is imperative that the US administration and the North Korea agree on the format of discussion, regardless of personal antagonism. North Korea's security concerns need to be addressed, as its fear of being dealt with as Iraq, its fellow companion in the "axis of evils", is real. Moreover, the US skepticism towards Pyongyang and its willingness to comply with international norms is equally real and there is a need to ensure compliance and verification of the disengagement of the nuclear program.

The Presidential election in the US might change the mode of interaction as Senator Kerry has repeatedly claimed that the policy towards North Korea is flawed and characterized by lack of interaction. However, in case Senator Kerry would become the President he is forced first to deal with the conflicts in Middle East and Afghanistan before turning to Northeast Asia, i.e. the Korean peninsula would still be in the backseat. Regardless of whom becomes the US President after the election the military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq makes it more interesting for the US to find a diplomatic solution or management mechanism, to prevent that nuclear proliferation does not increase or that the conflict escalates. It could however be a change in objectives if the administration changes. This is not to say that it will be more effective in the case of North Korea as Senator Kerry could fall into the Clinton trap of "nuclear blackmail" as he will be perceived as weaker than President Bush, but the US withdrawal from Korean peninsula might end.